

KUWAIT COUNTRY PROFILE

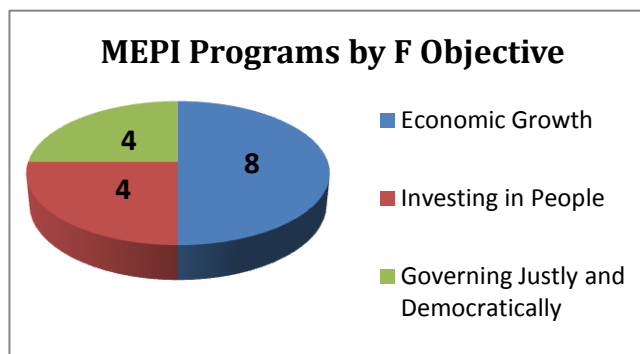
MEPI in Kuwait: Promoting Equal Opportunities for Participation and Prosperity

Foremost among MEPI's efforts in Kuwait are programs that empower women and engage youth, encourage democratic processes, and support growth and transition in Kuwait's economic sector. MEPI-sponsored projects have made notable gains in assisting women to develop their campaign experience and MEPI continues to encourage women's participation as candidates, activists, and voters in future elections. Other MEPI-sponsored projects in the country include media training on blogging and ethics in journalism, and projects to strengthen the leadership skills and sense of civic responsibility among Kuwait's youth. MEPI projects also strengthen civil society organizations in Kuwait so these organizations can play a more positive role in Kuwait's political and democratic process. To promote economic prosperity and reform, projects funded by MEPI support the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) between Kuwait and the U.S.

MEPI's Kuwait Portfolio

There are currently 16 active MEPI projects in Kuwait: 13 multi-country projects including Kuwait; and 3 Kuwait-specific projects.

The pie chart shows which U.S. Foreign Assistance objectives are addressed by MEPI programming in Kuwait.



MEPI's Partnerships in Kuwait

The **National Democratic Institute's (NDI's) "Expanding Support for Political Reform"** project is designed to strengthen democratic processes in the Gulf. In Kuwait, NDI is empowering political groups to organize and run effective campaigns at the local and national levels. The four women members of parliament elected in 2009 all received MEPI assistance through training programs implemented by NDI and American University and have been active parliamentarians.



The **Family Law Program**, administered by Freedom House, assists a wide spectrum of individuals and organizations, including Kuwaiti national NGOs, women's organizations, civil society organizations, religious leaders, academic experts, youth leaders, parliamentarians, and lawyers, as they advocate for the adoption and reform of family laws that expand women's rights. The Kuwaiti Legal Article Writers' Group continued to publish articles on women's rights and Kuwait's Personal Status Law in the Kuwaiti press to raise awareness throughout 2009. The

project trained a cadre of Kuwaiti journalists on using a gender-sensitive lens in their reporting, and published and distributed a Women's Rights Advocacy Resource Guide focusing on the Kuwaiti Personal Status Law and Bahraini Shari'a Judicial Rulings. This seminal publication, in both English and Arabic, will help scholars, reformers, legislators, and the public to understand the laws in Kuwait and Bahrain from secular, religious, and comparative perspectives.

Local activists in Kuwait are promoting civic responsibility in the Gulf state. **Zawaya**, a Kuwait-based NGO, is raising public awareness with a local grant from MEPI through youth-targeted workshops, media campaigns, and cultural programming. In early 2009, the MEPI local grantee kicked off its campaign, honing in on values such as tolerance, respect for the law, respect for others, integrity in the workplace, and the protection of public resources in Kuwait. In addition to workshops and other grant activities, 15 young Kuwaitis, with the help of Zawaya staff, held a successful summer 2009 cultural event/youth talent show called *"Corners of Passion Brought to Life,"* a show promoting the values associated with civic responsibility. As part of their multi-targeted approach, Zawaya also produced a television advertisement with 40 local celebrities endorsing values such as respecting the opinions of others. Zawaya's advertisement was launched on Kuwait's nine television channels in February 2009.



Jusoor Arabia, a Kuwaiti organization dedicated to meeting the challenges of future development and reform in the Arab world through leadership training, consultancy, and assessment, is developing leadership skills among youth to productively engage them in civil society, business, and government. The organization completed the first phase of their MEPI local grant project, the Advanced Youth Leadership Development Initiative, in the spring of 2009. Already in Phase II activities, this is the only project in Kuwait that focuses on building life and leadership skills in young

professionals for careers in public and private sectors. The first phase of the initiative included 13 different thematic workshops. At the completion of each of the week-long workshops, teams were asked to work together on a project, such as going through the process of creating an NGO or a small business. Together, and under the mentorship of Jusoor Arabiya, the students are developing their projects and seeking the assistance of subject matter experts. In addition, in Phase I, the participants launched a collaborative website to communicate with each other, link with other youth groups worldwide, and provide an information resource for youth development issues.